UNITED
NATIONS

S

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1998/27
13 January 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 12 JANUARY 1998 FROM THE EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN OF THE SPECIAL COMMISSION ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL PURSUANT TO PARAGRAPH 9 (b) (i) OF SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 687 (1991) ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

The purpose of the present letter is to advise you, and through you the members of the Security Council, of a decision by the Government of Iraq that has been conveyed to me today, 12 January 1998. A copy of Ambassador Hamdoon's letter of 12 January 1998 to me and its attachment, a statement by an Iraqi spokesman on 12 January 1998, is attached to this letter (see annex).

With respect to the matters addressed by the statement by the official Iraqi spokesman, the central facts are as follows:

The Chief Inspector of UNSCOM 227, Mr. Scott Ritter, arrived in Iraq on 11 January, accompanied by 15 visiting inspectors. It is intended that he conduct inspections until 16 January. The overall team he leads draws upon staff resident in Baghdad and other visiting inspectors in addition to those who arrived with him, depending upon the nature of the site. During today's inspections, the overall team consisted of 44 persons drawn from 17 nations.

On the evening of 11 January, following customary practice, Mr. Ritter called at the National Monitoring Directorate in Baghdad to discuss arrangements for the forthcoming inspections. He made clear that the inspection teams would be composed on the basis described above. It was reported to me that those discussions had been largely businesslike and that the Iraqi side had expressed no concerns about the proposed composition of inspection teams.

Beginning in the morning of 12 January, the whole team having been assembled, the inspectors proceeded to conduct inspections at seven sites. Iraq declared three of these sites "sensitive" and was not able to make a decision as to which of its own categories it would assign one of the sites.

Prior to the completion of the work of inspection on 12 January, the statement by an official Iraqi spokesman was issued.

Turning now to the conduct of inspections, under the inspection plan for the period from 12 to 16 January, the team to be deployed to any given site would be drawn up on the basis of the nature of the site, the objective of the inspection at the site, the expertise required for the successful conduct of an inspection and the expertise held by individual inspectors.

The claims made in the statement by an Iraqi official spokesman seem to fail to take into account the facts with respect to the composition of the overall team of inspectors.

On the basis of the repeated decisions by the Security Council to the effect that Iraq must "cooperate fully and immediately, and without conditions or restrictions with the Special Commission", and that it is not for Iraq to dictate the composition of the Commission, its headquarters staff or the Commission's inspection teams, I propose to instruct the Chief Inspector to seek to proceed with his business tomorrow, 13 January, and, if possible, until the planned programme of inspections is completed.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations with the request that he transmit it, urgently, to his Government.

I am ready to brief the Council on these matters, as required.

(Signed) Richard BUTLER

Annex

[Original: Arabic]

Letter dated 12 January 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the Executive Chairman of the Special Commission established by the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 9 (b) (i) of Security Council resolution 687 (1991)

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a copy of the statement made by the official spokesman on 12 January 1998 concerning the decision of the Government of Iraq to halt the work of the inspection team led by Scott Ritter, an American (see appendix). The team will not be permitted to undertake any activities inside Iraq until such time as its composition is reviewed and made more balanced by the equal participation of the permanent members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nizar HAMDOON
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Appendix

[Original: Arabic]

Statement made on 12 January 1998 by an official spokesman of the Government of Iraq

We announced yesterday that the inspection team which arrived that day in Iraq, led by the American, Scott Ritter, is a blatant indication of the lack of balance in the composition of the Special Commission and its working practices in Iraq. The aforementioned team has nine American and five British members, one Russian and one Australian.

Considering it a major issue, we have already raised the matter of the unbalanced composition of the Special Commission, and have affirmed that United States and British control of the Commission is the reason for the continuing sanctions against Iraq and failure to implement paragraph 22 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991). The Americans who control the Special Commission centre and its activities in Iraq falsify facts and fabricate lies. Their intention is to prolong matters and they submit fallacious reports to the Security Council as to the demands that have been satisfied pursuant to Council resolution 687 (1991).

We cannot accept the continuation of this situation. We were hopeful that, after the last crisis, some reasonable adjustment would have been made in the composition of the Special Commission and in its working practices in Iraq. However, those in control of Special Commission headquarters in New York are insistent on their previous position and their biased policy. Sending this team, composed as it is, is evidence of this insistence and of lack of respect for the requests made by other States, and in particular those which are permanent members of the Security Council, that they should play a greater role in the work of the Special Commission.

It has therefore been decided to halt the work of this team with effect from tomorrow. It will not be permitted to undertake any activity in Iraq until such time as its composition is reviewed and made more balanced by the equal participation of the permanent members of the Security Council.